

VZCZCXR07231
PP RUEHDE RUEHDIR
DE RUEHDO #0841/01 3381044
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 031044Z DEC 08
FM AMEMBASSY DOHA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8493
INFO RUEHZM/GULF COOPERATION COUNCIL COLLECTIVE
RUEAUSA/DEPT OF EDUCATION WASHINGTON DC

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 DOHA 000841

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

H PLEASE PASS TO OFFICE OF CONGRESSMAN HINOJOSA
PLEASE ALSO PASS TO EDUCATION AND LABOR COMMITTEE PERMANENT
STAFF MEMBER (MAJORITY) RICARDO MARTINEZ

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: PREL KPAO OEXC OREP QA
SUBJECT: CODEL HINOJOSA DISCUSSES BRINGING MORE U.S.
SCHOOLS TO QATAR

KEY POINTS

-- Codel Hinojosa's members consulted with deans, administrators and students of the six U.S. university branch campuses at Education City, noting that the U.S. university presence in Qatar was "much larger" than they had originally thought.

-- Codel members urged Qatar Foundation's president to explore adding not only an American law school, but also high schools and community colleges to the mix of educational options available at Education City.

-- University deans noted that greater flexibility in visa processing for students, and allowing faculty to continue National Science Foundation grants while posted to Qatar, would help smooth out obstacles to greater exchanges between their home campuses and the branch campuses in Doha.

COMMENTS

-- (SBU) This Codel represented important USG engagement with Qatar in the education sector, something we need more of. As Qatar seeks to transform itself into a knowledge-based economy, opportunities for U.S. educational and research institutions in Qatar will only grow.

-- (SBU) As next steps in helping U.S. institutions take advantage of these opportunities, Embassy is prepared to assist Congressman Ed Pastor's office in organizing a video-conference between Qatar Foundation and Mariposa Community College, and with Congresswoman Grace Napolitano's office on a web seminar for interested schools in California's 38th district.

-- (SBU) Congressman Hinojosa also expressed interest in organizing field hearings and/or a larger CODEL visit to Education City to help other members of the Committee on Education and Labor understand the magnitude of the multi-billion dollar, long-term investment that Qatar is making in U.S. educational institutions. Embassy supports this idea.

EDUCATION CITY: IT'S BIG

¶1. A Codel led by Congressman Ruben Hinojosa, Chairman of the House Subcommittee on Higher Education, and comprising Representatives Henry Brown, Mazie Hirono, Grace Napolitano

and Ed Pastor, visited Doha November 12 - 14, spending a day focused on U.S. universities at Education City.

¶12. The Codel began their visit by touring the massive 2,500 acre Education City complex, which includes not only the six U.S. university branch campuses, but also the Al Jazeera Children's Television Channel. The Codel also viewed construction sites across the highway of the Qatar Foundation's convention center, the Qatar Science and Technology Park, and the Sidra hospital.

¶13. Texas A & M University at Qatar (TAMU-Q) hosted the Codel for discussions with U.S. university deans, administrators and senior administrators from Qatar Foundation, the organization that governs Education City, including its president, Dr. Fathy Saoud. The deans briefed the Codel on their experiences in setting up and operating their schools in Qatar, with Georgetown School of Foreign Service-Qatar Dean James Reardon-Anderson noting that, "Universities have been around for more than a thousand years, but this is the first time in history that they are attempting to operate an identical curriculum with the same requirements and standards far from their shores."

A REAL AMERICAN EXPERIENCE

¶14. The deans stated that, in accordance with their agreements with the Qatar Foundation, standards for student admission, curricula, grading, and faculty hiring were exactly the same as for their home campuses. Most faculty members are from

DOHA 00000841 002 OF 002

the home campuses, and those who have been newly hired have gone through the same hiring process at the main campus as any other faculty member would do.

¶15. These faculty exchanges are important, they said, in "maintaining our sense of connection with the home campus." In that regard, according to Carnegie Mellon University - Qatar Dean Chuck Thorpe, it would be easier to entice professors to move from Pittsburgh to Doha for a year if they were allowed to continue their National Science Foundation grants in Qatar. According to current USG policy, he said, grants must be terminated when faculty leave the United States.

¶16. Echoing that sentiment, Dean Reardon-Anderson said that he understood the imperatives of securing U.S. borders, but asked for greater USG flexibility in considering visa applications from students at U.S. universities in Doha. "Student exchanges are vital for our institutions," he said. Congresswoman Mazie Hirono said that she understood the schools' predicament, and noted that Congress Members would "do the best we can" to accommodate student travel when reviewing relevant immigration laws. Congresswoman Napolitano encouraged schools to reach out to their Congress Member when a visa application is stalled so that the congressional office can intervene when appropriate.

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

¶17. Congressman Hinojosa congratulated Qatar Foundation President Dr. Fathy Saoud on the progress that has been made in bringing American educational opportunities to Qatar and, through the many international students at Education City, to the broader Middle East. He encouraged Dr. Saoud to consider expanding the range of institutions to include not only a U.S. law school, which Qatar Foundation is actively seeking, but also high schools and community colleges.

¶18. In order to help educate students who may not be ready or suited to Education City's elite schools, Rep. Hinojosa said,

"Congressman Ed Pastor has one of the most highly-rated community colleges in the United States in his district, and you should talk with them about setting up in Doha." As a starter, he said, Qatar Foundation could promote student and teacher exchanges at the high school level, with the goal of bringing in more U.S. high schools that could prepare students to feed into Education City schools. (NOTE: The Michael DeBakey School of Houston opened its doors in Doha in September, and is currently teaching 44 students. END NOTE)

¶9. CODEL Hinojosa did not have the opportunity to clear this cable.

LeBaron